

elevation is the lowest, a direct invitation to man that he should cut the neck. Some learned people will explain that originally the sea did run between the two Americas—that was the origin of the stories the Spaniards heard when first they landed on these shores—and that the passage was filled up by a volcanic disturbance. Anyway, the neck is not of rock; it is mostly of volcanic ashes. The “continental divide” is at Obispo, and you have to make your imagination skip to understand that from that mound the watershed is divided Atlanticwards or Pacificwards.

In some of the shop windows in Panama I saw on sale little crystals from the Culebra Cut made into scarf pins, cuff links, and pendants. This sent me on an amateur geological expedition. The earth's crust has had rough roasting and twisting in these parts. The region is a sort of volcanic refuse heap; everything is jumbled, and the fact that there are no regular strata and the top soil is often heavier than the under has considerably increased the difficulty of excavation. There is bedrock, but it is below the line of the Canal, though a tongue of it sticks out on the Pacific side, and Panama City is built upon it. Much of the cutting is through red clay and green marl and rock that is as hard as granite, but which absorbs water, and then you can crumble it 'twixt finger and thumb. There



HEATED VOLCANIC ROCK IN THE CULEBRA CUT, FEBRUARY 16, 1912.

are lots of quartz crystal ; but it is as easily broken as chalk, and water makes it brittle. This strange geological formation has bamboozled the engineers many a time. Of course Job's comforter, who occasionally has a look at the Canal, says, "Very wonderful ; but it will all be shaken to pieces at the slightest earthquake." Well, considering the Isthmus is in the line of earthquakes there is always the possibility. Faint tremors have been known, but there is no record of a severe shock. The fact that in one of the ruined churches in Panama is a flat arch—or was, for I believe arrangements were made for its destruction—which could not have stood a shake, is accepted as proof that Panama is immune from danger.

The country has many rivers, some of them navigable for some distance, but little use is made of them, and their banks are heavily wooded and the villages are far apart. The Republic is close to the Equator, between two great seas, and moisture loads the air though the climate is strangely even. According to the thermometer, the heat has never been up to 100° Fahrenheit, but so great is the humidity that it seems much more and soon exhausts one's energy.

A remarkable feature which soon attracted my attention were the lighthouses, built in the jungle and on the hillsides which will abut Gatun Lake

when it is filled. The journey across the lake will be rather zig-zag, and the course at night will be steered in accordance with the position of the lights. A double row of automatic acetylene lighted buoys will be placed along the route, besides the powerful rapid flashing range lights. Where the Canal narrows, as through the Culebra Cut, beacons will flame. Acetylene instead of oil has been chosen because of its superiority; burned in a self-luminous burner acetylene gives an intensely concentrated white light, and is five times as strong as the light which could be obtained from oil. Mr. James Pattison, who has been paying particular attention to the flashing range lights, says: "An entirely new principle in flashes permits the production of as many as 55,000 separate and distinct flashes from one cubic foot of acetylene. Older types of apparatus could not produce more than 1,400 flashes from the same quantity of gas. The new flasher may be adjusted to give light periods of any desired length of time down to one-tenth of a second or less, alternating with dark intervals of any desired length. Single, double, or triple flashes, etc., can be produced with ease; in fact, any light character obtainable in lighthouses equipped with the most modern lens arrangements can be produced by the new flasher.

"The principle of the flashing light as a valuable navigation signal has been taken advantage of in



BUILDING A LIGHTHOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THE JUNGLE.



the highest degree by designing the new flasher to consume the least possible amount of gas per flash, and to make the dark intervals when no gas is being consumed as long as is consistent with efficiency. It is naturally of the utmost importance for the safety of navigation that the ratio between light and eclipse, after having once been fixed, must not vary in the slightest degree.

“Nearly all lighthouse authorities agree that flashes of short duration followed by relatively short dark periods are much more distinctive and efficient than long flashes, and this view is borne out by the fact that of the thousand or more dissolved acetylene lights in operation throughout the world the majority are adjusted for short flashes. Of the light characters adopted by the army engineers for the lights on the Panama Canal the flashes do not in any instance exceed two seconds' duration, and the majority will be set to three of a second. The new flasher, although designed especially to suit short flashes, may easily be adjusted to give flashes of any desired length.”

Colonel Goethals has avoided his military uniform ever since he set foot in Colon. But I know I am right in saying that the remarkable progress which has been made during the last few years is due to the fact that the work has been in the hands of Army men, who have maintained a discipline which

would not have been accepted from others. And this discipline, which has abolished friction, plus organisation, has worked wonders.

The name of Goethals is one to conjure with in the Isthmus. Yet it cannot be said that the man himself is well known. I ran across him in the long, open-coached train one day, quietly smoking a cigarette and reading a newspaper, and I doubt if one of the fifty people in the coach knew who he was. Some diverted stream up-country had broken bounds and was interfering with the cutting, and he was on his way to make that stream go the way he wanted.

The Administration Building is on the topmost height of Culebra—the usual big, tin-roofed, ugly, useful place. It was there I went to school, as it were, and with big scale maps, and embossed elevator plans, and models of the locks, I learnt a good deal before I started to inspect the real thing. The building is divided into offices, and everything and everybody is indexed. If there is some matter about Jonathan Slocum, everything about J. S. can be obtained in two minutes—how old he is, where he was born, what is the colour of his eyes, where he was vaccinated, what his work is, the number of his engine, how much he earns.

Nothing is easier than to get to the “boss” if he is in his office. He sees most comers, but he

does not say much, and the visitor soon begins to feel that Colonel Goethals may have something to do besides listening to gush about the Canal. I got easy admittance to him, for I carried a personal letter of introduction from the late Mr. Wheelaw Reid, the United States Ambassador to Great Britain. But he is not easy to catch. Most days he is out on the line by six o'clock, for he likes to keep his eye on everything done. He is back at Culebra by noon, has his bath, a shave, lunch, and then the afternoon is devoted to office work. At night he goes back again, when everybody else has gone home, and he thinks out and works out things that are causing perplexity. He is back at his house by ten o'clock, and in ten minutes he is in bed and asleep.

I found the Colonel was willing to talk about most things except himself. He talked willingly enough about the larger aspect of the Canal when he understood I was not interviewing him but seeking information to verify or qualify my own. He has got an ear for any complaint. I have alluded to his famous Sunday morning courts, when he adjudicates on any personal difference which may arise. Always quiet, calm, autocratic but fair, he has the esteem of all the thousands of men under him. Here is some verse which is sung at smoking concerts, and which explains how he is regarded.

TELL THE COLONEL

If you have any cause to kick, or feel disposed to howl,
If things ain't running just to suit, and there's a chance
to growl,

If you have any axe to grind or graft to shuffle through,
Just put it up to Colonel G. like all the others do.

See Colonel Goethals, tell Colonel Goethals,
It's the only right and proper thing to do.
Just write a letter, or, even better,
Arrange a little Sunday interview.

Casey is an engineer and treated awful bad,
Eight minutes' overtime they worked the poor defenceless
lad,

So Casey sees the Colonel, with tears in his eyes, and says :
" I cannot stand for this no more without lay-over days."

" Dear Sir, the commissary here," writes Mrs. Percy Jones,
" Is charging me for porterhouse which ain't no more than
bones,

And, I assure you, Colonel, that the pork chops what they
sell

Is rotten. I enclose herewith a sample, just to smell."

Mrs. Hobbs and Mrs. Dobbs are neighbours in a flat,
And Mrs. Hobbs calls Mrs. Dobbs a dirty this and that.
Then Mrs. Dobbs reciprocates, and maybe both are right,
But in the end the Colonel has to arbitrate the fight.

Don't hesitate to state your case, the boss will hear you
through,

It's true he's sometimes busy, and has other things to do,
But come on Sunday morning, and line up with the rest,
You'll maybe feel some better with the grievance off your
chest.

See Colonel Goethals, tell Colonel Goethals,
It's the only right and proper thing to do.
Just write a letter, or, even better,
Arrange a little Sunday interview.

A point I wish to emphasise is the sobriety of the workers. I did see some drunkenness when I was in the Isthmus; but I never saw any man engaged on the Canal affected by liquor. What has been done would delight the heart of the abolitionist. The American working man was never much of a drinker, but in his spare time he likes to hang round a saloon. At first anybody could start a saloon by paying a small sum for a licence. That meant there were more saloons than requirements called for, and it was a struggle for existence. Since the United States has been master in the Zone saloons are permitted in certain places only, generally requiring a special journey if you want to visit one, and the licence, though not high, is high enough to keep the number severely limited or they would not pay. I know there was a good deal of grumbling at first at difficulties being put in the way of the workers getting the refreshment they wanted. But as they could not get it they soon reached the state of not wanting it. Besides, the tropics is not a good place for the consumption of much alcohol, and the men have found out they can do very well without it, except to have a little at home or when

they are on holiday bent. The result is that I doubt if you will anywhere find a more sober lot of workers than the thirty odd thousand men engaged in making the Canal.

Another thing about the white workers is that comparatively few of them come from the hustling parts of the United States. When first I kept meeting men who had the soft voice and easy manners of the South, I thought it was pure accident which had landed me amongst folk from Alabama and Georgia. But subsequently I found that the majority were Southern born. I wondered why there was not a more representative crowd from the Northern States, and nobody could give me an explanation. So it was necessary to fall back on theory. The news of the evil climate of the Isthmus had been well circulated—and when a New York journal sets out to show the climate is not of the best it makes your flesh creep, and you are convinced you have only to set foot in the land to die before the set of the sun. As things were pretty bad at the start the idea is in the minds of the Northerners, emotional and mercurial, despite their hard-headedness, that, notwithstanding the “newspaper talk” in recent years that “Panama is one of the healthiest places in the world,” things are still a bit risky, and, apart from the advantages in pay, “a bird in the hand is the noblest work of God,” as

the Texas Congressman put it. So they stay at home.

Men of the South, however, have got better experience of tropical climes, and they know a good deal about malaria, and New Orleans is nearer to Colon than is New York. So they have not been frightened off.

Further inquiry revealed that, whilst amongst the artisans were a fair number of Northerners, the majority of professional men were Southerners. Further, as I have shown in a preceding chapter, the rate of pay for a good doctor is about the same as for a good engine-man. For various reasons—chiefly because he has to devote many years to expensive study, with practically no remuneration at all—the professional man ought to be better paid than the artisan. And the reason this is not so in the Zone, strange though it may appear, is because he is better educated. Being better educated, he knows before he goes out to Panama the true position of affairs, and he does not imagine that his first duty will be to die. Further, an opening is given to him to have experience which he might have to wait long for in the States. Accordingly, because there are plenty of young men in the professional classes eager for a year or two in the Isthmus, they can be secured at comparatively low rates. That trait is not a characteristic of the working man in

the United States any more than in other countries. He has an ear prone to listen to tales of woe, and, if he is to be induced to go to Panama, the wages must be so excellent that he is dazzled by them. It is only on these terms that good artisans can be obtained. That explains why workmen are so well paid and the professional men so indifferently paid. The higher the rank the worse is the pay in proportion ; and, as I have previously shown, the highest and most responsible posts are held by capable men at salaries which Englishmen of similar capacities, and given similar responsibility, would laugh at. Splendid though the pay be for white workers, the tendency is soon to sicken of the life, and more than half of them come home every year.

Everything, however, is done to make things pleasant for the transplanted Americans. All the bands and sports and concerts, and amusements generally, are provided to battle against something more infectious than malaria—namely, home-sickness. A whole chapter could be written on the endeavours of the authorities to keep off this disease, for when a man gets it, and particularly when a woman gets it, he and she infect their neighbours, and there is nothing for it but to return to the States. Men were encouraged to bring out their wives and children because it was thought they would think more seriously than unmarried men about pulling up





stakes and leaving good pay, free rent, free doctoring and cheap food. An attempt was made with a sort of matrimonial bureau to induce the here-to-day-and-gone-next-month bachelor to cease his loneliness. Even the best of bachelor quarters were prim and like barracks. Get married and you had a three-roomed furnished house placed at your disposal without extra charge, and there was nothing to pay extra for coal or for ice or for electric lighting. But all these blandishments were not very successful.

How to keep the young men from sighing for the attractions of the cities in the States has been almost as great a problem as fighting the "slides" in the Culebra Cut. That was the reason the Commission built club-houses in nearly every little workers' settlement, and called in the aid of the Y.M.C.A. to manage them; and as these are "teetotal shanties," one of the first results was to drop the consumption of alcohol. Mr. Frederic J. Haskin, in a report on the establishment of these club-houses, says:—

"The result was that the consumption of bad whisky and worse beer fell off at least 60 per cent. in the towns where the clubs were established. The men were social beings, and they had to meet somewhere, and until these clubs were established the bar was the only place open to them. Now they

have bowling alleys, billiard rooms, gymnasias, libraries, dark rooms for camera clubs, soda fountains, lounging rooms, and so on, under the direction of the Y.M.C.A.

“The secretaries in charge of the club-houses form bowling teams, organise billiard tournaments, plan camera clubs, and do everything possible to bring in the people and get them interested. Last year there were more than fifty thousand games on the bowling alleys, and nearly two hundred thousand games of pool and billiards were played, with seventy-four different tournaments in progress. The chess and checker clubs, glee clubs, minstrel clubs, camera clubs, Bible clubs, and the like, catered to the varying tastes of the men.

“In the reading and writing rooms one finds more comfort than in the public libraries of the United States. There are easy Morris chairs where the tired worker may rest while perusing his favourite magazine, studying his technical journals, or looking over the newspapers from the principal cities of the United States.”

So, into whatever club I dropped—and I always found there was a good luncheon to be obtained for 2s. 1d.—I saw gymnasias, passable libraries, literary clubs, wrestling teams, fire drill, baseball, aquatic sports, boy scouts, dances, and fireworks in the evening. The ladies' clubs, with their “socials”

and singing and sewing, and "Anti-cigarette Leagues" and Red Cross Societies, are many.

The men are kept hard at work full six days a week. On Sunday morning every religious community is busy—you would think a great revival was in progress—and Sunday afternoon is given up to sports, and the evening to entertainment. "You see," said one of the chiefs of the Administration to me, "when a thousand men are watching a baseball match on the Sunday afternoon they have no time to hang round, get mopish, and begin thinking what it is like in the States." What the exodus would be like if it were not for the "jollity department," it would be dangerous even to guess.

CHAPTER IX

PANAMA OF TO-DAY

DURING my journey to the Isthmus I read a number of books, magazines, and newspaper articles written by gifted Americans.

They made me eager to reach Panama, the romantic little bit of transplanted Spain, with courteous men and beautiful women, and the architecture rivalling Seville and Grenada in wonder, and where the air was laden with the odour of flowers and life was a delicious fragrant afternoon. It was all nicely done.

But I wish the American writers had a better sense of comparison and did not scribble about Seville unless they knew something about it. Such writing deceives the ignorant, and irritates those who know better. Panama is one of the most interesting places in the world—and to justify me in that statement I may casually remark I have been in fifty-nine different countries—but for quite different reasons from its romantic charm.

To-day Panama is a grimy, undistinguished, semi-Spanish town, not unlike a score of unknown

towns you can visit in Spain itself. The near completion of the Canal has given a boom to real estate, and land speculation is one of the businesses of the day. An idea is abroad in Panama that the city will become the Constantinople of the Pacific, and that it will take toll of all the riches which pass its gate, and so be one of the great places of the earth. Maybe.

The streets used to be foul. But Colonel Gorgas has made the Panamanians pave their principal streets and give some elementary attention to the disposal of sewage. Most of the ways are high-walled, shady and still smelly. Here and there is a quaint church, looking older than it is, and here and there are squares with luxuriant vegetation; there are always plenty of drowsy loungers. The ramshackle sea wall, falling to decay, and the turrets askew, and soldiers hanging round with rifles to prevent the escape of prisoners, is a spot to idle a quiet hour when you want to get away from being stuffed with information as to how many cubic yards of earth were removed from the Culebra Cut last month, how the water of the imprisoned River Chagres is rising against the Gatun spillway, and how British shipping will begin to disappear off the waters of the earth once the citizens of the United States settle down to business and build a mercantile marine.

The Panamanian is an easygoing gentleman, except in regard to politics. Politics with him means revolution, and revolution means money for those on the side of the victors. There is rarely any money in the Treasury. Whilst I was in Panama the police went on strike because they could not get their pay. Nothing is manufactured in Panama except revolutions; even the famous Panama hats come from Ecuador. Three or four of the wealthiest people have got motor-cars. This is not exactly a motoring country, though you can have a run out to old Panama, seven miles off, where there are some scant, jungle-buried remains of the first European city on the west American coast. So the owners of the cars tear up and down the few hundred yards of worn street in Panama to the peril of their compatriots.

It is the happy belief of the Panama people that they are the centre of all things. Indeed, I rather gathered that the chief credit of the Canal is due to themselves. Some of them unfolded to me the ambition to make Panama the great educational metropolis of the world. With the Canal open Panama will be admirably situated to receive students from North and South America, and it will be about equi-distant between the crowded populations of Asia and Europe. So what better spot could you discover for the establishment of a University for the world?



FROM THE OLD SPANISH PORT AT PANAMA; ISLANDS GUARDING
ENTRANCE TO THE CANAL IN THE DISTANCE.

Photograph by Underwood & Underwood, High Holborn, W.C.



This is the kind of drowsy dream the Panamanian indulges in as he sits beneath the orange trees in the warm of the evening and sips his beverage. He is podgy and eats spiced foods, which are not good for a tropical climate, and he is disposed to malaria. The Panamanian lady may be good looking when young, but she loses her figure in the early twenties. There are families in Panama bearing the names of Spaniards who came here in the earliest days.

But the quick-moving, quick-witted American is in the land, and he does little to hide his contempt for the Panamanian. What amused me, however, was the way in which different sections of the American community regarded each other. The Canal Zone is under military administration. In the States the Army officer holds nothing like the social position he does in Europe. But the Zone is, in a way, like a miniature India. The military rank first. Civilians sometimes show resentment at the airs of the military men; whilst the complaints of the civilian ladies about the presumptions of the wives of officers, who are not making half the money their husbands are, and who would not be looked at back home up north, just make the visitor laugh, recall India, and recognise that human nature is much the same all the world over.

Quaint are the streets of Panama. When night falls and the cool comes the crowds are out, the

cafés are thronged, and life is light-hearted. At the back of the city, on the rise of Ancon Hill, is Ancon Hospital, dozens of mosquito-proof buildings where there are beds for 1,600 patients, and at night hundreds of lights tell where sufferers lie. I saw a good deal of the medical men attached to the hospital—keen, hard-working, picked men from the States. There are wards for white folk and black folk, a large operating theatre, and special wards for special diseases.

Long hence, when the Canal is one of the accepted things of the world, the way in which Colonel Gorgas kept the Zone free from yellow fever and malaria, so that it was possible to get men to toil, and the work now being done at Ancon in tending the sick and the wounded, may be forgotten. Yet it ought to be remembered. A toll of injury and death has to be paid in the war the Americans are waging with Nature in cutting this Canal.

One morning, having been at Colon, I returned to Panama by what is known as the "hospital train." At the rear of the train were two big cars, airy, with suspended beds, a doctor on duty, and nurses in attendance. A dozen stations are on the way between the two towns, and I noticed a space by the side of most stations "Reserved for hospital patients." Here sat the sick, emaciated, yellow-skinned, all energy eaten out of them, waiting to be

taken along to Panama. Here on stretchers lay the injured—a fall of rock, the slipping of a girder, an unsafe scaffold, had done the mischief—and they were lifted into the cars. All along the track we picked up such passengers. At Panama, among the little cabs drawn by wretched horses, were the big ambulance wagons, hauled by sturdy mules, and stalwart negroes to carry and assist the sick and wounded. *Clang, clang, clang*, sounded the bells of the ambulance wagons as the ailing makers of the Canal hastened to Ancon Hospital.

Now, I do not know that in all my wanderings I have ever run across a finer lot of white men and white women than those I met at Panama. All nations have their Ministers and Consuls, and on gala days flags from all parts of the world droop from the staffs above the balconies. No man is better known and liked than Sir Claude Mallet, the British Minister. He has been in these parts all his life, and with a shrewd but genial personality he has maintained the dignity of his own country and won the esteem of the representatives of other lands. He is married to a charming Spanish lady, and every Englishman passing that way is sure of a kindly welcome from the Minister and his family.

There is Colonel Gorgas, with the softness of manner which becomes a Southerner, tanned, white-haired, blue-eyed, and with that gentle deference

which makes one think of the days when America was young, and the Southern States reared gentlemen who kept their old-time courtesy of manner as a precious possession. There is Mr. Bucklin Bishop, the secretary to the Canal Commission, who was a New York journalist (a close friend of President Roosevelt, who placed him out here), who knows all about the Canal—I place on record my indebtedness to him for much assistance—and who behind mirthful eyes has a brain that grasps details, reckons things at their true value, and is a man who never “blows.” There is Colonel Mason, the aide to Colonel Gorgas, and who goes about his work in a quiet, resourceful way; and the chiefs of Ancon Hospital, Dr. Deek and Dr. Herrick, who were good to me when I fell ill.

A better band of Americans, resolute, confident, doing their work thoroughly and without fuss, the United States could not have sent to Panama. These were not the “cold feet,” but men who had stuck to their job determined to see it through. Some had never been back to the States for five years. Those who were married had their families with them, and their bungalows, encased in mosquito netting, were places of genuine refinement.

These bungalows are on the slope of Ancon Hill. After a dinner party, as jolly as though we were in the States itself, it was pleasant to sit among the

flowers on the curtained verandas and joke and laugh, when Britishers and Americans chaffed each other about national frailties, and talked about the Canal and orchids—chiefly orchids, I remember, for most of the men I met were orchid mad, and had an orchid club, and they had expeditions into the jungle to collect orchids, and they turned over melancholy roots as though they were specimens of priceless porcelain. Sometimes they talked about gold in the hills, sometimes about books, but whether the talk was about books, or gold, or the Canal, or why all Englishmen beat their wives with a poker, it inevitably turned to orchids.

Most Saturday nights there was a dance at the Tivoli Hotel, and all of the young Americans and Americanesses turned up. The women were in their best frocks—though they confessed these were out of date and only suitable for intellectual Boston, Mass.—and the men were in conventional evening garb or white duck suits. Dance, dance, and everybody dances in the high temperature till they perspire and get lobster-faced, and collars change from white to grey and are limp, and men have to mark their programme: 9 Waltz (change collar); 17 Two-step (change collar). They are all far from home, at the long promised gate to the Pacific; but they forget and heed not, and have a good time.

A heavy, languorous, oily, sickly atmosphere hangs over Panama, partly decayed jungle and partly the kerosene oil with which the mosquitoes are slain. All things seem damp and clammy. At first I thought I was being provided with damp sheets. But everything is damp. I found that within twenty-four hours my boots began to grow a crop of moss. Within a week I thought my clothes were ruined, so smudged were they with green mould. Every morning there was the uncomfortable feeling one was crawling into garments that had not been aired. When you buy envelopes in Panama there is no gum fastening to the flaps; they would stick before use; so you have to keep a pot of gum for adhesive purposes. Matches refuse to ignite. In the cigar shops an electric bulb has to be kept aglow in the cases, just to give off slight heat, or the cigars would be unsmokable. There are few books in Panama; the damp speedily undoes the binding. The way residents get over the trouble is to have a dry closet, a more or less air-tight room in which there is a small electric heater, which is sufficient to resist the damp, and in this closet clothes are usually kept.

Nearly everyone who visits Panama stays at the Tivoli Hotel. It ought, by strict rule, to be called the "Washington"; the reason it was given the foreign name it bears is because it is on a slight



THE TIVOLI HOTEL AT PANAMA.

eminence which the Spaniards called the Tivoli before they knew there were Americans. When it is finished it will be a fine place ; but it is constantly being enlarged or altered, or there is furious hammering, breaking in doors that will not open with a key because the damp has swollen the wood ; consequently there is noise. The hotel belongs to the United States Government, and there is a big card commanding you to buy your " meal ticket " before you go in to feed. A coloured gentleman takes your ticket just as though you were going into a theatre. There is always an elaborate " meenoo " with many foreign dishes in weird French, and not at all like the dishes to be obtained in their native lands. Formerly you could get a bottle of wine. But the unco' guid of the United States were shocked that the Government should traffic in liquor, and the sale of alcohol had to be stopped. But you can have alcohol if you care to bring it in yourself. However, you can get a bottle of ginger ale for 1s. 0½d. At the news stall you can buy a local paper of four small pages for 2½d. I do not know how accurate was the limited news from the States, but the English news was generally wrong. Still, you can get a fortnight old New York Sunday paper for 5d., and for a copy of a month old *Punch* I was charged only 10d.

The Panamanians are nice people, most polite.

Their ladies, olive complexioned, dress daintily in the afternoon and evening. But it is injudicious to call on a Panamanian family when you are not expected. The females are then unkempt, dowdy, and in loose robes, and if any romance had got into your head overnight it disappears. There are several picture palaces, where what the Americans call the "movies" can be seen, and occasionally there is a play at the theatre, and sometimes an opera, not very good, though to hear some local people talk Covent Garden is a poor show in comparison.

Practically no social intercourse exists between the American and Spanish ladies. I have an idea they have scorn for each other. The Panamanians are not intellectual, whilst many of the American ladies strive after culture with an ardour which is frenzied. There are more women's clubs and associations in the Isthmus than you will find among any similar number of white women on the surface of this globe. They are mostly religious, and the members are busy in elevating the minds of each other. The American Federation of Women's Clubs has extended to Panama, and there are clubs which teach singing and others which teach bowling, which is capital for the figure. They do good work, chiefly in making the ladies forget the jungle. Gaudy plumaged birds and monkeys interest at first; but

felt, an ass. The bride, as black as your other hat, was in white and orange blossom, and a coloured attendant spread out her train, and lanky-shanked piccaninnies stood round, also in white, and all the congregation was blackfaced and overdressed. The bridal couple, grinning, were driven away in a carriage and pair. The horses were white, and though the driver was black, he was wearing a white hat.

Down in Panama proper you see many diminutive policemen—Panamanians. They do a lot of bullying, and if anybody chaffs one of them he blows his whistle and six other diminutive police run to the rescue. The shops are mostly flyblown, and there is on sale most of the stuff rejected by the United States. You wonder who buys such rubbish. There are many saloons. Up side streets you see Panamanians lazing on their balconies. Look into the yards, and you see the patio, a sort of open yard with rooms round about. This place is quite Spanish, but, except in the President's palace, there was no fountain and no pretty flowers.

Nearly every shopkeeper and a good many people you encounter in the street are engaged in selling lottery tickets. There is a State Lottery, and the office is under the Bishop's palace in the Cathedral Plaza. No good Panamanian misses taking one ticket a week. The Church gets some of the money, and

the draw is always on a Sunday, and the first prize is £1,200. On Sunday evenings a band plays in the Plaza, and the young Panamanians, dressed "up to the nines," saunter round and admire each other. If you are looking out for sights you can go to the prison and give coins to the prisoners, who are mostly impudent. When you get into prison in Panama it much depends on the wealth of your friends how long you will stay there.

Or you can go to the cemeteries. There is an American cemetery, and there is a Jewish cemetery; there used to be a French cemetery, but it is now used by the Chinese; and, of course, there is a cemetery for Panamanians. The various races do not mix in life and they are not going to be jumbled together after death, except the French, who have no say in the matter, and the Chinese, who are temporary occupants of the graves till there is a shipload of them that can be sent in one cargo to their own flowery land. Some Panamanians are buried underground. Some are stuck in coffin-sized alcoves in the wall which surrounds the cemetery. These niches are hired by the lamenting relatives, and the rent has to be paid every eighteen months. If it is not paid, then the little slab is removed, the remains are hauled out and thrown amongst a lot of other remains which lie in a heap in a field at the back

of the cemetery. The coffins are not wasted, but are sold second-hand. A serviceable coffin sometimes is utilised by four or five corpses. When the alcoves are "for rent" and there is dumping, the Americans insist on the use of disinfectants. The cemetery is a farmed-out concession, and so there is no sentiment in the business. The owners do not enlarge; they periodically dig up the old bodies to make room for new ones.

So far as years count in Europe the churches are modern. But they age rapidly in Panama. The cathedral was built a century and a half ago. Yet it looks as timeworn as though it belonged to the time of Columbus. The architecture is nondescript, with Spanish-Moorish predominating. The interior is as tawdry as most Spanish churches. But there are older edifices than the cathedral. There is the Church of San Felipe, put up in 1688, and I wonder if the builders knew what was happening in England in that year. San Felipe has a Moorish tower. It is a sombre, unrenovated old place, but is dignified alongside the galvanised-iron-roofed, up-to-date American buildings near by. Panama is well off in Catholic churches. But they are not much looked after, and one was being demolished while I was there because a good price had been offered for the site. There are many heavy doors, with many huge brass knockers. There are remains of a great mon-



THE CATHEDRAL IN PANAMA CITY.

From photograph by Underwood & Underwood, High Holborn, W.C.

astery, now long forgotten. One morning I sought shelter from the heat in the Church of Santa Anna, a forlorn building. The interior was shadowy and musty, and nigh derelict. Yet when it was built by El Conde de Santa Anna, in the days of long ago, it must have been a fine place. There are no nobles of Santa Anna now. But its founder and his family, sleeping in the vaults, had a resplendent coat of arms. The only thing rich about the church is the silver sacramental service, and it is badly battered. The condition of Santa Anna is typical of Spain's hold on this part of the world.

Panama of to-day reckons from 1673. In a later chapter I tell about the destruction of Panama Viejo by Morgan, the Welsh pirate. One day I drove out to see all that can be seen of old Panama, over a good road, past the shanties of natives half hidden by sugar-cane, past a stretch which will make an ideal golf course if it is not built over before someone recognises its proper use, and along a track through heavily matted jungle.

Like the transplanted ruin of a stern Scotch castie, there stands a relic of Spain. It is of stone, and is solitary. Farther on, running out of the jungle, is a rude cobbled road, but moss is on the cobbles. The sea comes in sight, and on a black, slimy shore melancholy waves are churning. On

one side, picturesque amid the towering palms and vivid vegetation, is a sturdy ruin, somewhat like a church. Over a greasy path you can climb to the interior and find trees growing there, and see where the joists were which held the upper rooms, and if you are inclined you may read the names of a thousand visitors who have scrawled, scratched and chiselled them for your benefit. You can push amongst the high shrubs and find remnants of walls. But Nature has been jealous of man's invasion, and is fast covering all that remains of old Panama.

It was a cloudy, hot, rainy-season day when I was there. The air hung heavy, and occasionally there was the screech of a wild bird as it fluttered through the woods. The seas kept tumbling on the black, muddy shore, unceasing, just as they have done since this, the first European city on the Pacific coast, was founded. It was difficult to conjure a picture of this old city in the days of Cortez and Pizarro, and Drake and Morgan.

The time the new Panama puts on a thin cloak of romance is in the evening. Night comes like a fall of purple, and the atmosphere is soft and languid. The little shops are lit up; there are lamps beyond the casements of the houses; there is the ring of the guitar and a caressing song in Spanish; the saloons are gay, and laughter mixes with the rattle of the dominoes on the little marble tables. Bright

colours are subdued by the night except when a shaft of light touches them. Life goes very pleasantly in this city by the sea. But you must have the Spanish temperament to desire to idle all your life away in its crooked streets and flowered plazas.